

Name: _____

Date: _____

Outdoor Laboratory: Messier Objects

Introduction

In the 18th century, discovering comets was a way to be recognized as an astronomer. During the years 1758 to 1782, Charles Messier, a French astronomer (1730 - 1817), compiled a list of approximately 100 diffuse objects that appeared to be cometary at first, but he later determined to be other types of celestial objects. The catalog was his way of keeping track of those objects. Published at the behest of friends and colleagues in 1774, the original catalog contained 45 of those objects. The Messier Catalog was born.

The Messier Catalog became well known as a collection of the most beautiful objects in the night sky. The catalog includes nebulae, star clusters, and galaxies. The Messier Catalog may be his greatest legacy, but he is also renowned for the discovery of 13 comets and the co-discovery of at least 6 more!

The entire catalog can be observed through small telescopes and binoculars under dark sky conditions. Under quasi-dark skies, like the Observatory, the fainter nebulous and galactic objects can be difficult to observe in a finder scope. Over time your observing vision will improve, but initially, you must be very patient.

Procedures

Set up and align your telescope. Alignment is key. Work to ensure your alignment is as accurate as possible. Make use of the atlas charts in your Peterson Guide as they can help you locate fainter objects in the finder scope.

You are to find three Messier objects. Your instructor may offer guidance on the type of objects you are to locate depending on the time of year. Your instructor must also observe the object in your eyepiece in order for you to get credit for the observation.

<u>Messier #</u>	<u>RA</u>	<u>Dec</u>	<u>Instructor Verification</u>
1.			
2.			
3.			